

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**State Honors Downtown Emergency Service Center with *Friend of Housing* Award**

Tacoma, Wash. — On Oct. 20, Downtown Emergency Service Center, or DESC, was honored with a 2010 *Friend of Housing* Award for its outstanding programs expanding affordable housing resources for Washington’s low-income residents. Washington State Housing Finance Commission presented Dan Malone of DESC the award before an audience of 350 people.

The Commission presented a total of seven awards during its annual *Friend of Housing* Award Ceremony at the Hotel Murano in Tacoma. This event was part of the *Housing Washington 2010* conference on affordable housing. The highest honor, the 2010 Margaret M. Sevy Affordable Housing Lifetime Achievement Award, was given to Downtown Emergency Service Center Executive Director William G. “Bill” Hobson.

“The Downtown Emergency Service Center’s innovation, partnership, and determination to end homelessness makes them a *Friend of Housing*,” said Kim Herman, executive director of The Commission. “DESC is an organization that is vital to the community and truly integrates housing with treatment and rehabilitative services. We are delighted to honor the center with the statewide recognition it deserves.”

The Center was founded in 1979 as an emergency shelter for disabled homeless adults who were unable or unwilling to access existing survival services, with a special concern for the mentally ill. A year later it received certification as a state-licensed mental health service provider.

In 1994, DESC opened its first supportive housing project, the 52-unit Union Hotel. Two more supportive housing projects were opened in 1997: The 64-unit Lyon Building and the 40-unit Kerner Scott House. A year later DESC became a state-licensed provider

of chemical dependency treatment, and now also provides day-services, employment services, and street outreach programs.

Since 2001, DESC has opened five additional supportive housing buildings:

- 1811 Eastlake, a 75-unit project for chronic public inebriates;
- The Morrison Hotel, a 190-unit renovation of a historic downtown hotel;
- Evans House, 75-units, which uses Medicaid resources to provide the on-site supportive mental health services;
- Rainier House, 50-units, with set-asides for 8 veterans; and most recently,
- Canaday House, an 83-unit facility.

DESC operates 160 units of scattered-site supportive housing. All together the agency provides permanent supportive housing to 789 individuals who would otherwise be out on the streets without a direct connection to vital services.

Unmatched in this region for its services for disabled and homeless adults, the agency currently serves over 7,100 people, including 1,300 in its clinical programs. Over 379,000 meals are served annually in addition to operating its emergency shelter services that provide 300+ beds every night.

Staff members serve as consultants and mentors to organizations throughout Puget Sound and beyond, including New York City and the Yukon Territories.

**Awards:**

- “Best Practice” award from the U.S. Dept of Housing and Urban Development; an “Exemplary Program” award from the U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services;
- Two awards for “Excellence in Affordable Housing” from the MetLife and Enterprise Foundations; and
- The 2007 Maxwell Award of Excellence from the Fannie Mae Foundation for operating 1811 Eastlake, which was named the most effective housing program for chronically homeless adults in the nation.

**Washington State Housing Finance Commission** is a publicly accountable, self-supporting agency dedicated to increasing housing access and affordability and to expanding the availability of quality community services for Washington state residents.

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